United Nations E/CN.6/2011/NGO/79

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 December 2010

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February-4 March 2011
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Charitable Society for Social Welfare, Human Relief Foundation, International Islamic Charitable Organization, International Islamic Committee for Woman and Child, International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, International Islamic Relief Organization, International Muslim Women's Union and Muslim World League, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-68834 (E) 070111

Please recycle

Statement*

1. We, on behalf of the Coalition of Islamic Organizations, fully support the efforts made to solve the problems of socially vulnerable groups but with full respect to the diversity of cultures and characteristics of the different peoples of the world. We support Governments in their reservations made during the signing of the international conventions on women and children, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing documents and other relevant documents, on all that was contrary to their religions, laws, values and cultures. We emphasize the importance of the Governments to adhere to their reservations, which is a right stated in the Charter of the United Nations, and to respect the will of their peoples.

2. We are gravely concerned about the recent escalation of prejudicial practices and laws to Muslim women in various countries as to their right to practise a way of life according to Islamic teachings, especially in terms of wearing headscarves. The rise of Islamophobia and stereotyping of and discrimination against Muslim women pervade public discourse, currently encapsulated in the non-issue of the burka or nikab in Europe, which has seen various countries criminalize wearers of face veils. In some countries, a ban on wearing the headscarf at university and at the workplace has persisted, meaning that thousands of women have been denied their right to education, which also affects their ability to participate in the work sector.

3. It is thus with the integration of gender perspectives in all legislations, policies and programmes that assumptions and theoretical stances arise to form a particular point of view about the diagnosis and analysis of women's issues. To assume the gender perspective as an interpretative framework that classifies humans according to their sexual orientation is misleading and a deficient tool to analyse the world. The Committee on the Status of Women should consider other interpretative frameworks to enrich the development of women worldwide. Restricting ourselves to a single school of thought is to restrict our ability to accurately diagnose the situation of women worldwide and prescribe solutions tailored and relevant to their respective context. Adopting a single framework is ignoring the body of diversity and is blind to the rich cultural differences, as well as the religious values that are strongly held by millions of women around the world.

4. Islam believes that women and men are equal but not identical and acknowledges the biological differences which determine the roles and responsibilities in the society. Therefore, there are certain responsibilities for men, such as protecting the family, fulfilling their needs and providing for them financially, which are not obligations of women. Similarly, women are responsible for motherhood and the care of the family.

5. Women may share the work outside the home but should not be forced by law to do so. Similarly, men may share the care of the household but should not be obligated by law to do so. Therefore, it is important that legislations, policies and programmes do not destabilize the family unit which is an important nucleus of society.

* Issued without formal editing.

10-60X

6. It is not acceptable that there is an intimidating atmosphere for Muslim women if they choose to lead their lives according to Islam. It is time Governments and more people took a stand against the vilification of Muslims to ensure that society does not further descend into the worst forms of racism and xenophobia.

7. We are also fully concerned about the increasing number of HIV/AIDS infection worldwide despite more intensified efforts to combat it. Although international statistics have shown that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS remains low in the Muslim world, with rates below 1 per cent, we will strive to prevent its spread. The Islamic solution to the prevention of HIV/AIDS is to go to the root of the problem. Therefore, Islam advocates a culture of chastity throughout the whole community, upholding of sexual fidelity at all costs during marriage, screening of blood donors and collaboration among social and cultural organizations to encourage people to uphold sexual morality and to create a drug-free society.

8. Last but not least, we call upon all parties concerned with the rights of women and children to work for the alleviation of the suffering of women and children who are under occupation, especially in Palestine and Iraq. These women and children are subjected to injustice and violation of their very basic right as human beings, the right to live.